



DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

News Release

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STATEWIDE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE AT 4.2 PERCENT IN FEBRUARY

Decline in employment from Department of Education fuels higher Unemployment rate

HONOLULU- The Hawaii State Department of Labor and Industrial Relations announced today that the statewide seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in February was 4.2 percent, an increase of 0.3 percentage point over January. In contrast, the national seasonally adjusted unemployment rate remained stable over-the-month at 5.6 percent. For the past twelve months, Hawaii's unemployment rate has been on average about 1.7 percentage points lower than the national rate. In February, the statewide seasonally adjusted labor force totaled 625,100 and was comprised of 599,100 employed and 26,000 unemployed.

The total seasonally adjusted statewide non-agricultural jobcount since February 2003 has increased by 8,900 jobs. In February 2004, the jobcount was 573,600, an over-the-month decline of 2,400 jobs, or 0.4 percentage point. The bulk of the job losses occurred in the government sector, which declined by 1,300 jobs due largely to with fluctuations in support staff payroll at the Department of Education. During the first week of February, about 200 cement mining and manufacturing workers went on strike. Effects of the strike on other industries,

including construction, were minimal in the February jobcount and unemployment estimates, as these figures reflect the payroll (jobcount) and calendar week (unemployment) of February 12th.

"We expect the state economy to continue to improve, following the trend that started over a year ago," said Nelson Befitel, Director of Labor and Industrial Relations. "We are seeing an increase in business confidence in the private sector, which will translate to more jobs during the upcoming months."

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